

News and Observer, October 17, 2007

Miller stands firm and alone

North Carolina congressman Brad Miller chose to stand alone last week on a nonbinding House resolution that defines the Ottoman-Turkish killings of Armenians in 1915 as genocide. Good for him.

The Raleigh Democrat was the only member of the North Carolina delegation on the House Foreign Affairs Committee to say no to the resolution.

It wasn't because he disagreed with either the spirit or the letter of the resolution's words, Miller said. He knows that as many as 1.5 million Armenian Christians died at the hands of Turkish Muslims in a bloody wave of extermination. And he knows Turkey stubbornly denies the mass killings for what they indisputably were.

"I wish we had the standing in the world that if we pass that resolution, Turkey would stop and examine the history of what happened and decide whether they should do something to come to terms with it," Miller told the News & Observer of Raleigh. "But the reality is, in Turkey and Muslim world generally, they will simply see the resolution as an insult and will be angry about it."

Miller made another point: There is an opportunity to stop genocide right here and now in Darfur with the help of Turkey and other Muslim nations.

Acknowledging the misdeeds of the past can provide a hopeful exercise in learning and healing. But in the complex political landscape of the Muslim world, Turkey has the power to be part of the solution. Or the problem.

Turkey provides essential supplies, including water, to U.S. troops in Iraq. There also have been long-standing tensions between the Turks and Iraqi Kurds, and the threat even of a Turkish invasion of northern Iraq. The last thing the United States needs is yet another war on a new front in Iraq.

What the whole world does need is a modern, democratic Muslim nation that helps instead of hindering the cause of peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region.

No matter how steep the moral high ground, this is neither the time nor place to pick another fight.